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NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Aves, Passeriformes, Cotingidae, *Phytotoma rutila* (Vieillot, 1818): new record in Brazil

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ABSTRACT: The White-tipped Plantcutter *Phytotoma rutila* has only one documented record for Brazil, that occurred in 1974 in the extreme west of Rio Grande do Sul. We report herein a second record - one individual photographed in April 2009 at a dunefield in the municipality of Capão da Canoa, northern coast of Rio Grande do Sul, about 700 km from the previous one. This new record corroborates the status of vagrant for this species in Brazil.

The genus *Phytotoma* Molina, 1782 is exclusively South American and comprises only three species: the Rufous-tailed Plantcutter *Phytotoma rara* Molina, 1782; the Peruvian Plantcutter *Phytotoma raimondii* Taczanowski, 1883; and the White-tipped Plantcutter *Phytotoma rutila* Vieillot, 1818 (Snow 2004). Although some authors prefer to allocate the genus in the family Phytotomidae, recent studies based on molecular biology indicated that *Phytotoma* is within the family Cotingidae (Belton 1994; Sick 1997; Prum *et al.* 2000; Snow 2004; Ohlson *et al.* 2007; Tello *et al.* 2009). The members of the genus are recognized by their conical bills with finely serrated edges. They are mainly folivorous, but fruits and seeds are also eaten (Bucher *et al.* 2003; Snow 2004).

Phytotoma rutila, like its congeners, shows marked sexual dimorphism. The main difference between genders is the rufous coloration on the male's front and most of underparts, while females are buffy to ochraceous below, conspicuously streaked blackish (Sick 1997; Snow 2004). The species occurs in savannas, shrubby fields, grasslands and anthropogenic habitats such as gardens and parks. It appears to prefer dry environments on poor and/or sandy soils (Ridgely and Tudor 1994; IUCN 2010). The species is usually seen in pairs or small groups, only rarely in larger groups or alone (Snow 2004; Rocha 2006).

Phytotoma rutila has the largest geographic distribution within the genus, occurring in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and southern Brazil. Nevertheless, it breeds only in the first two. A fraction of the population migrates in the austral autumn and winter (April to September) to northern areas such as the Uruguayan coast, northeastern Buenos Aires Province and Paraguay (Narosky and Di Giácomo 1993; Hayes *et al*. 1994; Snow 2004; Rocha 2006; Olmos 2009). Only one record was published for Brazil. In May 1974 five birds were recorded on two consecutive days in the extreme west of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil, in an area that nowadays is part of a state park, the Parque Estadual do Espinilho (Belton 1994). Two of those birds were collected.

Here we report a second record of *P. rutila* in Brazil. On 19 April 2009, one individual (Figure 1) was recorded by J.A.F.S. at a coastal dunefield (29°42'19" S, 49°59'10" W) in Capão da Canoa, a municipality located on the northern coast of Rio Grande do Sul. The landscape is mainly herbaceous *restinga*, the typical vegetation cover of these coastal dunes (Waechter 1985). However, the bird was observed in a disturbed area dotted with shrubs of *Acacia longifolia* and young *Pinus* sp., both exotic plants in Rio Grande do Sul (Cordazzo *et al*. 2006). The distance from the shoreline was about 500 m. The bird had front and lower parts pale orange with grayish flanks. (Figure 1). These features indicated that the individual was an adult male, since immature males are buffy gray-brown below

FIGURE 1. *Phytotoma rutila* recorded on 19 April 2009 in Capão da Canoa, state of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil.

and have rufous only on the flanks (Snow 2004). The paler orange was attributed to wear feathers. The presence of the observer caused the bird to fly into some nearby shrubs, and subsequent approaches resulted in the same behavior. Five additional surveys were conducted in the same area between May and June 2009 (20 h effort), but the species was not found again. The last survey was done with the specific purpose of finding *P. rutila*, and included the use of playback.

This new record is about 700 km to the east of the previous one (Figure 2). The landscape where the bird was seen agrees well with the habitats described for the species (Snow 2004). The month of the sighting (April) also coincides with the period when this migratory species is expected to occur in Uruguay and southern Brazil (Belton 1994; Olmos 2009). Since the individual was seen only once, we believe that it was a vagrant from the southern populations that migrate to the northeast of Argentina and Uruguay during the austral winter.

Venturini *et al.* (2007) reported an undocumented sight of three individuals of *P. rutila* in the Atlantic rainforest of the state of Espírito Santo, southeastern Brazil, in May 2005. This area is about 2,000 km further from the known geographic distribution of the species (Snow 2004). Since the record in Espírito Santo was undocumented and located far from the known geographic distribution of the species, we consider it is premature to include the Atlantic rainforest of southeastern Brazil within the range of the species during the austral winter. The occurrence of the species must be confirmed through documentation (Carlos *et al.* 2010).

Until the moment, there is not a known area where the species occurs regularly during austral winter in Brazil. Consequently, the present record corroborates the *status* of vagrant for *Phytotoma rutila* in the country (CBRO, 2011). The Espinilho State Park (30°11' S, 57°30' W) has a unique landscape in Rio Grande do Sul composed by savanna steppes (Veloso 1991), a habitat which the species usually uses in its regular distribution range. Moreover, it is located near the areas in Argentina and Uruguay with similar habitats where the species occur (Snow 2004; Olmos 2009). Considering these features, we believe that the Espinilho State Park and surroundings are the areas with the highest probability to find *Phytotoma rutila* in Brazil.

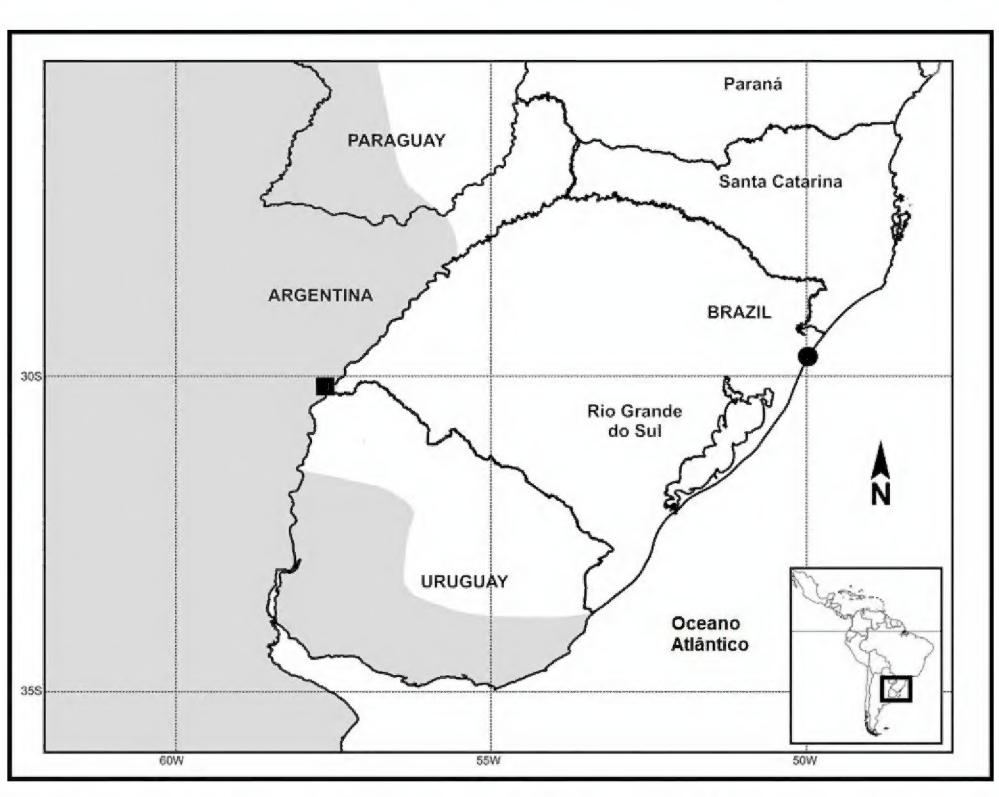

FIGURE 2. Partial geographic distribution of *Phytotoma rutila* in subtropical South America: previously known area (gray) after Snow (2004) and Olmos (2009); locality of the record made in 1974 at Espinilho State Park (black square); and locality of the new record in Capão da Canoa (black circle), state of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil.

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